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PROGRAM Panorama

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SUBJECT "The Rise and Decline of the CIA"

ROSS CRYSTAL: A lot of spy cases concerning the CIA lately, and it's been in the news more and more. But it seems many people do not understand the workings of the Central Intelligence Agency. So our next guest delved right into that organization.

Here is John Ranelagh, author of "The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA, from Wild Bill Donovan to William Casey." John also a producer a producer at Channel Four Television in England and author of two books on the history of Ireland.

This had to be a very difficult project for you. Where'd you begin?

JOHN RANELAGH: Well, I began in London and got into things and ended over here, as you see me. So I'm here today in Washington, having come to the end of a four-year trek, in fact, through the intricacies of the CIA.

CRYSTAL: We were just talking a moment ago about the problems of doing an unauthorized biography. But you try to do something on the CIA. What do they say to you?

RANELAGH: Well, I didn't actually ever approach the CIA directly. I spoke to people who had dealings with the agency and who had been in the -- I mean ex-officials of the CIA.

I had a very pleasant evening with Bill Casey, but that was as close as I came to having a direct contact, really.

CRYSTAL: Why did you do this?

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